

Simulacra, gods and the dead

Post by "Cassius" of November 14, 2020 at 9:05 AM

[Quote from Susan Hill](#)

Just me throwing woo into things again, right?

No, I don't think that is throwing woo into things, but for example in this case I think we need to question that wikipedia article's choice of words, this one in particular:

*WIKIPEDIA: He did not mean that people can see the gods as physical objects, but rather that they can **see** visions of the gods sent from the remote regions of interstellar space in which they actually reside.*

I would question the accuracy of this sentence, which in fact seems to me to be a little contradictory, in stating first that we can't "see" but then that we can "see." I question whether "see" is the right word even though "vision" is the word that I see is used to translate the passage from the letter to Menoeceus. This is Bailey:

to his blessedness : but believe about him everything that
can uphold his blessedness and immortality. For gods
there are, since the knowledge of them is by clear vision.
But they are not such as the many believe them to be: for but
indeed they do not consistently represent them as they ^{nat}
believe them to be. And the impious man is not he who ^{sue}
denies the gods of the many, but he who attaches to the ^{sup}

This is where we need a [Don](#) to help us track down any critical Greek wording on "see," but my view is that these images are likely not the same kind of images that we talk about being received by "looking at that tree over there." If the gods are in the intermundia (which is probably a fundamental premise of discussions on gods, since it wouldn't e possible to life a perfectly happy life here on earth) then we aren't going to be able to "see" them directly with our eyes like we can see other things.

A related question would be: what do we "see" in dreams? Are we using the eyes for that?

I am thinking that the "knowledge of them by clear vision" must involve something other than the eyes, which I gather is why DeWitt talks about the brain as a "supersensory" mechanism (if I remember his term correctly). The whole nature of the "images" discussion seems to contemplate them traveling all across space in all directions at all times, regardless of whether we choose to turn our head and focus our eyes in a particular direction or not. That would be much like today we are constantly surrounded by radio and television waves which contain

information, but which we can't interpret without electronic equipment.

Plus, I think it's probably true that the "images" discussion in general probably includes smells and sounds as well, since the whole discussion of all the bodily senses seems to involve particles traveling across space as the means of transmission.

So no I don't think that this discussion necessarily involves "woo" because I think that there is a lot of detail about images in the texts which are not being given effect by people who stop at the consideration of them as being "through the eyes." This is where I think the DeWitt approach is most important - we should dig through the details of the texts with fresh and unprejudiced eyes, without dismissing what we see at first glance as being "wrong," because Epicurus' frame of reference is so different from ours. I am convinced that Epicurus never "made things up" to suit his conclusions, and if he gave consideration to a particular phenomena like gods or divinity he did so because he thought there was something real there which needed examination.

I am perfectly prepared to believe that the explanation he gave to the phenomena might not be exactly correct, but at least for me I start with a strong presumption that the phenomena does exist in some way. We just need to work to dig it out, which is something that centuries of christians have had no real disposition to do.